

Technology, Trucks & Training



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Do you feel like your life revolves around meeting payroll, paying taxes and replacing equipment, and then your money goes in one hand and out the other? Kevin Rantanen, owner of Perrysburg Lawn and Landscape near Toledo, Ohio, decided to put an end to that feeling and transform his operation using modern technology, efficiency and better business practices.

While attending the NALP seminars at the GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Kentucky, Rantanen realized that for the past 14 years he had been working “IN” his business rather than “ON” his business. Rantanen says he couldn’t keep up with the paperwork, employees were coming like a revolving door, and he and his ill-trained employees were making too many mistakes.

Moving forward now

He’s now more confident that his Perrysburg Lawn and Landscape is headed in the right direction with the acquisition of two additional vehicles that are uniquely tailored toward his specific clientele, residential and light commercial use. The first purchase was an Isuzu NPR. This dump truck is unique in that the bed can hold more than 13 yards of mulch, has an electric tarp, ladders on both ends, barn doors, a hitch and even a wheelbarrow ramp complete with an onboard dolly. There is virtually no limit to what this truck can do in regard to light-duty landscaping and hauling work.

The other is also an Isuzu NPR that has had the frame extended by 3 feet and customized with a 16-foot flatbed and dove tail. It contains a 3-to-5-foot-wide tall area for grass and debris behind the cab with a side door. This truck is also equipped with four barn doors to access the flatbed or to load pallets.

He’s also upgrading the technology in his office to enable him to better control his business and make it more efficient. He signed up with Nextraq for GPS tracking, which now allows him to follow his trucks during each

service stop. When he's in his office, Rantanen can track all of the crews' movements, breaks and time spent at each job site.



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Kevin Rantanen, pictured, says this Isuzu, customized with a 16-foot flatbed, comes in incredibly handy for a variety of lawn service projects and tasks. It's one of two Isuzu's he added to his fleet this year.

IMAGE COURTESY PERRYSBURG LAWN AND LANDSCAPE

"I uploaded all of my mowing customers into the program that in turn created 'geo fences' around each house. So when the mowing truck pulls up to each lawn, I'm notified in the office of their arrival in real time," says Rantanen. "These GPS trackers are also very helpful when looking back weeks or months as it keeps a log of all the stops. If a customer disagrees with the day or amount of time spent on a job site, I can simply look back at the map for that day to see how long the vehicle was at the customer's location."

He then downloaded an app on his iPhone called "My Time Station," which is a free mobile time clock for his employee's phones. This simple and accurate way of tracking the employees time also tracks the employees GPS location during each punch of the clock.

"Now I know exactly where they are when they punch in or out and I know where each of my vehicles is located with my Nextraq GPS," says Rantanen.

Rantanen then turned his attention to the mountain of paperwork on his desk. He's confident he's found the answer.

"Neat Desk software has been a dream come true for my business," he says. "Neat Desk scans all of my receipts, documents and business cards and quickly turns them into searchable images. It's that simple. If I ever need to pull up a receipt or document, the scanner searches the images to find what I need and the images are even accepted by the IRS in place of the originals."

Rantanen had completed a NALP Trailblazer session where his operation was reviewed and he worked on ways to improve his systems.

NALP Trailblazer helps

"I took advantage of the Trailblazer program where NALP pairs up landscape companies with industry leaders for a day of consulting. This program has had a profound effect on my company as it has given me the courage and knowledge to grow my business effectively," says Rantanen. "I'm no longer hesitant to expand into very profitable size. I learned from my Trailblazer that proper organization of the business along with a strong safety and training program are absolutely necessary for growth."

By providing high-quality services and stressing customer satisfaction, Rantanen is positioning his company as the premier landscape service provider in his market.

Rantanen remains committed to using the latest technology in his operation system, tracking his costs and expenses and growing his business. He's addressing the challenges of operating in today's new economy and is taking Perrysburg Lawn & Landscape to the next level.